

excluded from the Kingdom of God; the former term denotes the passive, the latter the active male homosexual. This usage was continued in medieval Latin and even found its way into the early literature of sexology composed in the learned tongue. As late as 1914 Magnus Hirschfeld commented on the appropriateness of the term by claiming that 99 percent of the homosexual subjects he had interviewed described their own character as "soft" or "tender."

The Latin *mollis* may well be the origin of the eighteenth-century English **molly** (or *molly-cull*) = effeminate homosexual, a term given publicity by police raids on their clandestine haunts in London (1697–1727) following the relative tolerance of the Restoration era that had seen a homosexual subculture emerge in the British metropolis. The term *molly* also suggests the personal name *Molly*, a diminutive of *Mary*, so that the folk etymology introduces a separate nuance of the effeminate.

*See also Effeminacy; Women's Names for Male Homosexuals.*

## MOLLY HOUSES

The molly houses were gathering places for male homosexuals in London during the eighteenth century. The public was first made aware of them by the prosecuting zeal of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners. These public houses were at times relatively informal, or there could simply be a special room for "mollies" at the back of an ordinary public house. Other establishments were quite elaborate. Mother Clap, as she was called, kept a house in Holborn which on Sunday nights in particular—the homosexuals' "night out"—could have from twenty to forty patrons. The house had a back room fitted out with beds. In 1726 a wave of repression led the authorities to discover at least twenty such houses; a number of their proprietors were convicted and made to stand in the pillory, while three indi-

viduals were actually hanged for the crime of buggery.

The term *molly* for an effeminate man may be simply the feminine name *Molly*, often applied to a prostitute, but it may derive in part from Classical Latin *mollis*, "soft", which designated the passive-effeminate partner in male homosexual relations. It is also the first component in *mollycoddle*, which alludes to the manner of childrearing that makes a pampered, effeminate adult.

Outside the clearly defined setting of the molly house, it was exceedingly dangerous to approach another man for sexual favors. The descriptions of the subculture of the molly house always emphasized the effeminacy of the denizens. All the patrons were likely to be addressed as "Madam" or "Miss" or "Your Ladyship," and in conversation they spoke as though they were female whores: "Where have you been, you saucy quean?" Sometimes the diversions entailed mimicry of heterosexual respectability, such as enactments of childbirth and christening. Intercourse was referred to as "marrying," and the dormitory in the molly house was termed the "chapel." A prostitute remarked that his procurer had "helped him to three or four husbands." On occasion there were collective masquerades in which all the participants dressed as women.

The male homosexuals who frequented these establishments were from eighteen to fifty years old. Those who sought adolescent partners had the far more risky undertaking of meeting and courting them outside the bounds of this subculture. The popular notion of sodomy at the time made it a vice of the idle and wealthy, and there is some evidence that members of the upper classes frequented the molly houses, mainly in search of male prostitutes, but in so doing they also exposed themselves to scandal and **blackmail**. The records of prosecutions and executions contain no aristocratic names; the justice of eighteenth-century Europe was class justice. There were about a third as many

trials for attempted blackmail as for sodomy committed or attempted. Blackmail was the form of extortion practiced by the criminal or semi-criminal classes at the expense of the individual with means and social position who was nevertheless in the grip of forbidden sexual desires. When a blackmailer was convicted, the penalty was usually the same—pillory, fine, and imprisonment amounting to ten months in jail—as for attempted sodomy.

The subculture of the molly houses tried to protect itself from discovery and from betrayal by its own members. The worst foe of all was a vindictive participant in the molly houses' activity, or an individual who had kept records and documents which later fell into the hands of the authorities, indirectly revealing the whole clandestine network of sexual interaction.

For the ordinary Englishman with no powerful protectors, access to the shielded environment of the molly house was the sole way of making homosexual contacts with ease. The absence of a highly organized police force and of a vice squad with regular infiltrators and paid informers actually gave such houses more security than comparable establishments in the first half of the twentieth century enjoyed. It was religious fanaticism in the form of societies "for the protection of morals" that persecuted the subculture from above, while the criminal underworld preyed on it from below—a situation that remained into the twentieth century until the campaign to enlighten the public on the nature of homosexuality and reform the the archaic criminal laws made possible a new social environment for the homosexual community.

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## MONASTICISM

Originating in late antique Egypt, the monastic movement had as its goal to achieve an ideal of Christian life in community with others or in contemplative solitude. Monastic asceticism required the rejection of worldly existence with its cares and temptations. The institution, one of the formative elements of medieval society, transformed the ancient world. The asceticism it demanded stands at the opposite pole from what most modern (and classical) thinkers would deem a healthy attitude toward sex, diet, sleep, sanitation, and mental balance.

*Institutional History.* St. Anthony of Egypt (died 356), a son of Coptic peasants, came to be regarded as the father of the monks, though he was not the founder of monasticism. The Egyptian anchorite movement began, perhaps under the influence of Buddhism, just before the end of the persecutions, about 300. The *Life of Anthony* by Athanasius of Alexandria (circa 357) emphasizes Anthony's orthodoxy, the gospel sources of his renunciation of the world, his fight against the demons, and his austere way of life. Later depictions often stressed the sexual aspect of the temptations to which Anthony was subjected. Anthony found a number of imitators who lived in solitude, separated by greater or lesser distances, but coming to him at intervals for counsel; eventually he agreed to see them every Sunday.

Farther to the south, a younger contemporary of Anthony's, Pachomius, who had become a monk about 313, began organizing cenobitic communities. He founded monasteries that were divided into houses where men lived in common, performed remunerative labor, and practiced self-imposed poverty joined with organized prayer. A novelty in the ancient world, monastic communities were rigidly homosocial, consisting of members of only one gender but, needless to say, genital sexuality was proscribed. Monasticism began in the eastern provinces of the empire and was strongly colored by the ascetic